



**Washington Leadership
Academy
Student and Family Policies
2022-2023**

NOTE: At WLA, we're always growing. Our student and family handbook is available on our web site at all times, and may change from time to time. The applicable handbook is always live in on the WLA web site. The following policies are applicable as of 7/16/2021.

Discipline Policy

Joy, safety, and the wellbeing of students, is fundamental to the success of WLA. Washington Leadership Academy (WLA) maintains a discipline policy, informed by restorative practices and positive behavior incentive systems, for distributing logical consequences for behaviors that disrupt the positive and productive learning environment beyond the points system or for students receiving excessive points outlined in the School Culture Framework. The culture at WLA is positive and supportive, and created to ensure that all students can learn and grow towards goals of college success and lives of public leadership. Please see WLA's school culture framework for substantial descriptions of how WLA focuses on and encourages outstanding student habits and behavior. This policy also outlines due process for students and families.

Discipline: Disruptions and Consequences By Level Washington Leadership Academy has divided consequences for different types of behaviors into different levels of severity and consequence. WLA staff maintain ultimate discretion on which consequences are selected for each behavior. WLA staff may take mitigating and aggravating factors into account when making any and all disciplinary decisions. Behaviors are tracked using a behavior tracking system.

Below is a description of school-related disciplinary offenses for which a student may be subject to detention, in-school suspension, or in rare cases, out-of-school suspension or expulsion. A school-related disciplinary offense refers to the violation of this code occurring:

- While the student is on school grounds or school-related transportation;
- During a school-sponsored activity; or
- During events sufficiently linked to school.

Level 1: Minor disruptions of WLA's college- and career-ready culture

Level 1 disruptions by students prevent other students from learning and growing that extend beyond the points system employed throughout the school by teachers and staff. The maximum consequence for Level 1 disruptions is generally detention. Detention is a logical consequence for Level 1 disruptions because students who engage in Level 1 disruptions are taking positive learning time away from themselves and others, and detention takes free time away from the disrupting student. If students commit multiple of these disruptions in the same day or week, they may be subject to Level 2 consequences.

Level 1 disruptions include, but are not limited to:

- Disrespecting a fellow student, WLA staff, or any other member of the school community
- Disrespecting school property
- Use of cellphone in class
- Frequently violating the dress code
- Frequently arriving late to school or class
- Chewing gum or eating in class
- Disrupting class
- Frequently being unprepared for class
- Failure to bring their school issued computer fully charged to school each school day.
- Failing to return school documents signed
- Violating student technology policy or abuse of online learning platforms in a minor way as described in the school's student use policy
- Violating hallway expectations
- Exhibiting other behaviors as determined by WLA staff to be Level 1 disruptions

Level 2: Frequent minor disruptions or more severe disruptions to the WLA college- and career-ready culture

Level 2 behaviors are behaviors that disrupt student learning either by extending beyond minor disruptions or by repeating minor disruptions. Students making Level 2 disruptions may receive a maximum consequence of out-of-school suspension in the most severe circumstances, but are likely to receive detentions, reductions of in-school privileges, or other consequences determined by the WLA staff. In certain cases, the school may work with the offending student, parent/

guardian, and teachers to create a behavioral improvement plan that is put in place with long-term consequences until agreed-upon outcomes are met. In some cases, students causing Level 2 disruptions will also meet with WLA staff to help determine the origins of the behaviors and discuss ways to improve.

Level 2 disruptions include, but are not limited to:

- Disrupting, in an extreme way, in class, school, on school-related transportation, or during a school-sponsored activity
- Refusal to comply with phone policy after multiple redirections in a manner that is disruptive to the school community
- Engaging in untruthful behaviors/ actions with WLA staff
- Using racist, homophobic, bigoted, sexist, or otherwise offensive language ***not directed*** at a staff member or student
- Using or possessing tobacco products or paraphernalia
- Refusing to respond to WLA staff* (including, but not limited to, refusal to respond to directions, walking away from or disengaging a staff member during conversation, refusal to identify oneself to school personnel)
- Initiating physical contact that causes a disruption, depicts violence, or places students in a state of discomfort
- Throwing projectiles of any kind
- Misusing of hallway passes, student bathrooms, or personal facilities
- Intentionally persisting in disrupting the classroom even after teacher correction
- Violating student technology policy or abuse of online learning platforms in a major way as described in the school's student use policy
- Intentional and direct disregard for a teacher's direction
- Failing to show-up for assigned office hours, detention, or any other arrangements made by WLA staff
- Exhibiting other behaviors as determined by WLA staff to be Level 2 disruptions

*Students are expected to respond to school staff, students, and visitors in a way that embraces the school's values. Behaviors considered to be in breach of WLA values include, but are not limited to, the following: rolling of the eyes, making inappropriate remarks or sounds, challenging staff directives with disregard for the school's system for self-advocacy, using slights or

demeaning comments or gestures towards fellow students, or staff members. Such disrespect will not be allowed and consequences according to the above schedule will follow this behavior.

Level 3: Major misbehavior that endangers the WLA community If a student commits one of the infractions listed below, the student may receive an in- or in rare cases, an out-of-school suspension. (Note: local law prohibits some of the below offenses from resulting in out of school suspension. All local law will be followed when determining appropriate consequences.) Before the student's return to class, the student, his or her parent or guardian, and the student's classroom teacher, Principal or other school leader, must meet in order to address the student's behavior and develop a plan for improvement and potential restoration of the harm done. Infractions include:

Level 3 major misbehavior includes, but is not limited to:

- Severely disrespecting a fellow student, WLA staff member, school transportation provider, visitor, or other community member
- Severely disrespecting school property
- Using or possessing over-the-counter medication inappropriately
- Damaging, destroying, or stealing personal or school property or attempting to do so
- Committing sexual, racial, or any other form of harassment or intimidation
- Using abusive, vulgar, or profane language or treatment of a staff member
- Making verbal or physical threats, empty or otherwise
- Fighting, pushing, shoving, or other unwanted physical contact
- Setting off false alarms or calling in groundless threats
- Departing, without permission, from class, floor, building, or school-sponsored activity
- Using the building facilities in an unauthorized manner
- Forging documents or signatures in any way, including parental signatures
- Cheating or plagiarizing, or copying anyone else's work (including the use of language translation sites and term paper sites on the internet)
- Fundamentally and/or repeatedly disregarding school policies and procedures

- Exhibiting other behaviors as determined by WLA staff to be Level 3 disruptions

Level 4: Severe student misconduct WLA obligates itself to the protection and safety of its students, staff, and community members. Under this obligation there are occasions when the school will have to use heightened levels of consequences to ensure student safety. Listed below are Level 4 behavioral outcomes that, in some cases will result in expulsion or suspension and in some cases, might legally require suspension or expulsion. Furthermore, in compliance with D.C. and Federal Law, these circumstances might include or require the aid of local law enforcement. In certain circumstances, local law may prohibit suspensions for some of these offenses. Local and Federal law will always be followed.

Level 4 severe student misconduct includes, but is not limited to:

- Any student who is found on school premises or at school-sponsored or school-related events, including athletic games, in possession of a dangerous weapon, including, but not limited to, a gun or a knife; or a controlled substance, including, but not limited to, illegal narcotics of any kind
- Any student who assaults any educational staff on school premises or at school-sponsored or school-related events, including athletic games, may be subject to expulsion from the school
- Any student who threatens or attempts to instigate the assault of a staff member or threat of violence at the school through the use of a weapon, bomb, or facsimile.
- Repeated or excessive out-of-school suspensions
- Repeated and fundamental disregard of school policies and procedures
- Assault against fellow students or other members of the school community who are not considered educational personnel
- Destruction or attempted destruction of school property including arson
- Possession of alcohol or drugs on school premises or at a school-sponsored or school-related events
- Other behavior as determined by WLA staff to be Level 4 misconduct

Explanation of Discipline Related Policies and Protocols

Lunch Detention: Students may be assigned lunch detention during the school day which is a supervised lunch without peer interaction served in the presence of the school leadership or other staff member. Students will be notified of their detention prior to the time it is expected to be served. Students failing to show up for detention or otherwise intentionally avoiding detention will receive secondary consequences which may include in-school suspensions, revocation of privileges, or longer term detention assignments.

Revocation of Privileges: Students from time to time may be removed from certain privileges or events (field trips, during school celebrations, reward trips, dances, etc) as planned by the school's Director of Student Activities or other staff members. Students will be notified prior to the event of requirement for earning access to certain events or rewards. Students may also be removed from clubs or sporting events. In some circumstances, students may be placed on a long-term removal from privileges as arranged by the School Leadership Team.

After School Detention: Students may be required to serve detention for one or more hours after school. In these cases school leadership will notify the student and attempt to notify the student's parent/ guardian at least 90 minutes prior to the assignment. Parents are expected to make any arrangements necessary for the pick-up of students. Alternative arrangements cannot be made for the day the detention is assigned.

Suspensions and Expulsions: Suspensions are intended to provide opportunities for reflection, restitution, or correction of disciplinary outcomes. Suspensions are used to help ensure student and school community safety. For that matter, suspensions from the school will come with specific actions for restitution such as meetings with the Principal, students, parents, faculty members or community members involved with the affiliated incident. Furthermore, suspensions may come with research assignments, service work, or other ancillary restitutions as agreed upon by the student, teacher, and parent/guardians. Each level of school suspension differs from the other and will be used with varying number of days depending on the incident and as prescribed by the school's Principal.

In-School Suspension: To maintain a safe and orderly environment, sometimes students need to be removed from the classroom, but not the school. At other times, the student has exhibited behavior so antithetical to a positive learning environment that he/she needs time away from other students to stop disrupting them. In-school suspensions will be supervised and the student will use the time productively, working on his/her mastery-based assignments or using digitally based instructional tools to continue learning. WLA's model allows for students who are removed from the classroom to continue engaging in their learning materials. When students are assigned in-school suspension they are additionally suspended from club or sport participation or in some cases school enrichment events scheduled during those days.

Short-Term Suspension: Unless a student presents a danger or risk of substantial disruption to the educational process, the student shall receive the following prior to suspension of one to ten days:

Oral or written notice of the charges;

If the student denies the charges, an oral or written explanation of the evidence against him/her; and an opportunity to present his/her version of the relevant facts.

In the case of danger or a risk of substantial disruption, this process will occur immediately after rather than before the suspension.

Student Work During Suspension: During suspensions students will be provided with support to complete ongoing assignments from their classes. Teachers will coordinate with students and other applicable parties (Principal and Vice Principals) to determine the expectations for each of these assignments based on the teacher's upcoming assignments, due dates, and other pertinent learning materials. It is the responsibility of the student to request assignments and learning materials as well as arrange for the completion of assignments at home. Students can continue to communicate with teachers via existing electronic school systems including WLA email and Canvas, among others, as appropriate. In some cases teachers may allow for students to or recover work during appropriate times of the day upon the student's return to school.

Expulsion + Long Term Suspension: For Level 4 student misbehavior, when cases are considered extreme enough by the Principal, students may be suspended for 6 or more days or expelled which results in the student's permanent removal from the enrollment at the school. The Principal has the authority, and in some cases obligation to suspend and/or expel students in the following four circumstances:

- Student possession of dangerous weapon;
- Student possession of controlled substance;
- Sexual assault or severe harassment of a community member;
- Student assault of educational personnel; or
- Student charged with or convicted of a felony

For expulsion and long term suspensions, students may participate in a disciplinary hearing. The student shall receive:

- a. Written notice of the charges;
- b. The right to be represented by a lawyer or advocate (at the student's expense);
- c. Adequate time to prepare for the hearing;
- d. A reasonably prompt, written decision including specific grounds for the decision.

The role of the Principal and Board of Trustees: The Principal will consider mitigating and aggravating circumstances for each decision and will weigh additional factors as necessary.

All decisions by the Principal regarding long-term suspension or expulsion (hereinafter referred to in this section as "exclusionary consequences") of a student for any of the above-cited reason(s) are subject to review by a Discipline Review Committee or the Board of Trustees. Exclusionary consequences for all offenses except for the four listed above, *must* involve review of the recommendation by the Board of Trustees. Expulsion shall be defined as permanent exclusion from Washington Leadership Academy Charter School. Upon receipt of the exclusionary consequences decision from the Principal and Discipline Review Committee, the Board of Trustees will consider the exclusionary consequences decision of a student. In addition to

any other procedures approved by the Trustees, the following conditions may apply:

- The Principal may commence a proceeding before the Trustees by providing the Board with notice of the reasons for the decision.
- Prior to any decision by the Trustees to uphold the exclusionary consequences, the student will be provided with written notice of the following:
 - a. Charges and a statement of the evidence;
 - b. Date, time, and place of a hearing overseen by the school's Discipline Review Committee;
 - c. Notice of the right at the hearing to:
 - i. Be represented by legal counsel (at the student's/parent's own expense)
 - ii. Present additional or new evidence not already presented or reflected in the record.
- A student and/or parent, upon request, will have the right to review the student's records in accordance with applicable law.
- The decision by the Discipline Review Committee will be in writing and the controlling facts upon which the decision is made will be stated in sufficient detail to inform the parties of the reasons for the decision.

The purpose of the Board's consideration of the exclusionary consequence is to ensure that the school followed the proper procedures and legal requirements in making its decision, not to retry the facts of the case.

Process and Conditions for Discipline Hearings: A Three person team of WLA staff members will comprise the Discipline Review Committee to review recommendations made by the Principal for exclusionary consequences. The Discipline Review Committee serves as a panel for impartial decision making in disciplinary reviews. If a student violation in question includes a member of the Discipline Review Committee in the incident, an ad-hoc Committee member may be added to the committee and the committee member involved in the incident removed. Discipline Hearings are closed to the public. During the hearing, a school administrator(s) will carry out the following procedures:

1. A statement of the Disciplinary violation and overview of the Discipline Hearing procedures.
2. An explanation and review of the evidence or facts for which potential consequences are being considered. If video footage is available of the incident, the panel will view the footage.
3. The student may present any information that he/she wants to the Disciplinary Committee to consider. The panel may ask questions regarding the matter to anyone present at the hearing. An advocate may speak on the student's behalf. The student has the right not to speak on his/her own behalf. Neither the school's representative at the hearing nor the student nor his/her representative(s) will be given the opportunity for cross-examination during the hearing.
4. Within 24 hours of the conclusion of the hearing, the panel will make a recommendation regarding the consequence. The panel's recommendation will be effective immediately.
5. The student/family will be informed of the decision by phone within 48 hours of the conclusion of the hearing and written notification will be mailed within three (3) school days of the decision. This notice will contain information regarding appeal procedures, including the information in the next bullet.
6. If a parent/guardian does not request a hearing, or fails to attend the hearing at the scheduled date, time, and place, the right to a hearing will be waived. Therefore, the school will proceed with its determination regarding the proposed infraction and the ruling of the Disciplinary Committee.

The findings from the hearing will be approved and take effect immediately. Appeals will not be accepted by students who do not appear at the initial hearing. In making its decision, the Disciplinary Committee will review evidence presented at the hearing, any statements heard on behalf of the school or student, the WLA Cultural Framework, and prior conduct and/or academic performance, if applicable.

Discipline Panel Hearing Appeals: Any student who receives an exclusionary consequence has the right to appeal the decision in writing to the Chairperson of Washington Leadership Academy's Board of Trustees within five (5) school days of the written notice of the consequence being issued. An appeal panel will be formed by the Board Chair and include 3 Board members. The following process and conditions shall be implemented for all appeals:

1. An appeal hearing date will be set within seven (7) school days of the receipt of the appeal request.
2. The appeal hearing date will occur within thirty (30) calendar days from the date of the hearing being set.
3. The student may be represented by his/her parent/guardian and one additional advocate.
4. The student has the right to speak on his/her behalf at the Appeal Hearing. The student may choose not to speak at the Appeal Hearing.
5. The student may not return to WLA and participate in school activities while an appeal is pending.
6. Appeal hearings are closed to the public.
7. If a parent/guardian fails to appear at the Appeal Hearing the right to appeal is waived, and the original disciplinary decision will stand. The parent will be notified in writing of the consequence of not appearing.

In making its decision, the three-member Appeal Panel will:

1. Review all evidence and documentation from the Discipline Hearing and any supporting documentation;
2. Review any statements heard at the Disciplinary Committee on behalf of the school or student;

3. Review the WLA Cultural Framework including the Student Code of Conduct;
4. Review the student's prior conduct and/or academic performance;
5. The panel may ask questions regarding the matter to anyone present at the hearing. One advocate may speak on the student's behalf. The student has the right not to speak on his/her own behalf.

Neither the school's representative at the hearing nor the student nor his/her representative(s) will be given the opportunity for cross-examination during the hearing. If the consequence is overturned, the cumulative record of the student and any other school maintained records will reflect that conclusion. If the Appeal Panel upholds the consequence, then the consequence shall be imposed, and such decision will be final. Decisions made by the Appeal Panel will be final.

Protocol for Returning to the School Community from Suspension: When a student returns from suspension out of school the student must meet first with school leadership to discuss how that student will be reintroduced to the school community and remaining portions of the student's consequences (prolonged in-school suspension, revocation of privileges, etc.) The school leadership will likewise ensure that any restorative assignments made on behalf of the suspension are discussed and planned to be met.

Student Restraint: The WLA points system and discipline policy clearly outlines consequences for student misconduct. These procedures do not allow for corporal punishment and corporal punishment of students is prohibited. School personnel can use reasonable force as is necessary to protect students, other persons, and themselves from an assault by a student. When such an assault has occurred, a Principal shall file a detailed report of such with the school board. All personnel authorized to administer any forms of restraint shall be trained annually in accordance with Department of Education guidelines.

With Respect to Special Needs Students: Federal and state law provide certain procedural rights and protections relating to discipline of students who have been identified under such laws as having special needs based

upon a disability. WLA will adhere to these rights and protections. Pursuant to 34 CFR 300.530(e) if a student is to be suspended for up to 10 days a manifestation meeting will be held to review the student's Individual Education Plan and determine if the incident was a manifestation of their disability.

If it is determined that the student's behavior was a manifestation of the student's disability, the student will have consequences consistent with 34 CFR §300.530(f), including return of the student to the educational placement as appropriate. If it is determined that the student's behavior was not a manifestation of his/her disability, the situation will be reviewed to determine disciplinary action in accordance with the policies that adhere to the pertinent disciplinary level. If a student with a disability is suspended, WLA provide supplemental instruction consistent with 34 CFR §300.530(d) with the exception of extenuating circumstances outlined in 34 CFR §300.530(g).

Felonies and Arrests: The Principal has the authority to suspend or expel a student who has been charged with a felony if the Principal determines that the student's continued presence would have a detrimental effect on the general welfare of the school.

Notification of Student Records to Local Education Agencies: If a student who has been expelled applies for admission to another school or school district, the superintendent of the school district to which the application is made may request and shall receive from the Principal a written statement of the reasons for said expulsion.

WLA Attendance Policies & Procedures

Daily and timely attendance is critical to WLA achieving the goal it has for both students and community. Students' attendance is mandatory every day that school is in session. Additionally, Students are expected to be on time every day. Daily attendance is critical to the success of the school but also a legal obligation to the city, WLA has serious consequences for students who are frequently absent.

Attendance Codes

WLA Attendance Codes as reported to the Office of the State Superintendent of Education:

- **Present (P):** Student is physically in attendance at scheduled periods of actual instruction for at least eighty percent (80 percent) of the full instructional day, or in attendance at a school-approved activity that constitutes part of the approved school program for that student (i.e. field trips, internship).
- **Unexcused Tardy (T):** Student arrives after 8:27 am and does not have a signed letter of excuse provided by a parent, guardian, or doctor. Student is physically in attendance at the remaining scheduled periods of actual instruction for at least eighty percent (80 percent) of the full instructional day, or in attendance at a school-approved activity that constitutes part of the approved school program for that student (i.e. field trips, internship).
- **Excused Tardy (ET):** Student arrives after 8:27 am and has a signed letter of excuse provided by a parent, guardian, or doctor. Student is physically in attendance at the remaining scheduled periods of actual instruction for at least eight percent (80 percent) of the full instructional day, or in attendance at a school-approved activity that constitutes part of the approved school program for that student (i.e. field trips, internship).
- **Excused Early Dismissal (EED):** Student is physically in attendance at scheduled periods of actual instruction for at least eighty percent (80 percent) of the full instructional day, or in attendance at a school-approved activity that constitutes part of the approved school program for that student (i.e. field trips, internship), and if the school has received written communication of the dismissal.

- **Unexcused Early Dismissal (UED):** Student is physically in attendance at scheduled periods of actual instruction for at least eighty percent (80 percent) of the full instructional day, or in attendance at a school-approved activity that constitutes part of the approved school program for that student (i.e. field trips, internship), and if the school has not received written communication of the dismissal.
- **Partial School Day (PD):** Student is physically in attendance for at least twenty percent (20 percent) of the instructional hours regularly provided on a single school day.
- **Unexcused Absence (A):** Student in attendance for less than twenty percent (20 percent) of the instructional hours regularly provided on a single school day without a timely and valid excuse provided. Information on how and when to submit excuse notes, and what qualifies as a valid excuse is listed below.
- **Excused Absence (E):** Student in attendance for less than twenty percent (20 percent) of the instructional hours regularly provided on a single school day with a timely and valid excuse provided. Information on how and when to submit excuse notes, and what qualifies as a valid is listed below.

Virtual Attendance

Students are expected to attend remote learning teaching sessions and complete online learning modules when WLA operates in a remote learning status. Students' attendance will be verified through either virtual classroom attendance, Advisor check-in procedures, direct communication (by email or phone) with a WLA staff member, or record of engagement on WLA's online learning platform (Canvas).

The following codes apply to students attending WLA virtually:

- **Virtual Present (VP):** Student was confirmed present through either virtual classroom attendance, Advisor check-in procedure, direct communication (by email or phone) with a WLA staff member, or record of engagement on WLA's online learning platform (Canvas).
- **Virtual Unexcused Absence (VA):** Student's attendance could not be confirmed through virtual classroom attendance through one or more of the following methods: Advisor check-in procedure, direct communication (by email or phone) with a WLA staff member, or

record of engagement on WLA's online learning platform (Canvas). A timely and valid excuse was not provided.

- **Virtual Excused Absence (VE):** Student's attendance could not be confirmed through virtual classroom attendance, Advisor check-in procedure, direct communication (by email or phone) with a WLA staff member, or record of engagement on WLA's online learning platform (Canvas), but a timely and valid excuse was provided (See chart below).

Tardiness and Early Dismissal

Unexcused Tardy

Timely arrival to school and to each individual class is key to the success of our school and each student. Late arrivals are distracting to students who are on time and incur a loss of learning for the student who is late. At WLA, learning begins the moment a student enters the building and into each of their classrooms. Obtaining the goals of our school and the ambitious outcomes of our curriculum means that learning will always be the urgent priority at our school. Tardiness and its resulting distraction greatly limit our ability to achieve those goals. WLA will work with students towards habits of timeliness as it is critical to their college and career readiness. Tardiness is defined by a student arriving to school or class later than the allotted start time. Students are to be present in the building **by 8:27 am and must be seated in their first session class by 8:30am** each morning. Students that arrive after 8:27 am will receive an email to the parent or guardian email on file.

Excused Early Dismissals

All early dismissals must be communicated via email to attendance@wlapcs.org. Students will only be released if the school has received written communication of the dismissal from the parent or guardian email address on file. WLA will send communication to the parent or guardian email address on file indicating the time and date that the student dismissed. If no dismissal is communicated in advance via email, a parent or legal guardian is required to sign-out students in-person from the office. The school will not send students to waiting or parked cars; parents must come into the office and present identification to the office manager prior to a student being released. A letter from the parent or guardian properly identifying another adult whom they authorize to pick up their child is required. Students must have been physically in attendance at scheduled

periods of actual instruction for at least eighty percent (80 percent) of the full instructional day, or in attendance at a school-approved activity that constitutes part of the approved school program for that student (i.e. field trips, internship). Released students that have been in attendance for at least twenty percent (20 percent) of the school day will be considered attending for a partial school day.

Partial School Day

Parents and students need to be mindful for the time that they are out of the building. Partial School Day indicates an instance when a student arrives late and leaves early in a singular school day and is in attendance for more than twenty percent of the instructional day.

Absenteeism

While WLA makes exceptions for absences based on circumstances related to the excuses listed below, all absences, both excused and unexcused contribute to a student’s absence record. Chronic absenteeism is when a student is absent – either excused or unexcused – for more than 10 percent of the instructional days in a given school year.

A student will be considered truant at the accumulation of 10 or more unexcused absences in a given school year.

Excused Absences

WLA makes exceptions for absences based on circumstances and available documentation. To qualify as an excused absence, the absence **must** fall in the categories listed below, and **must** be reported by the student’s parent or guardian **within 5 school days upon the student’s return to school** via to attendance@wlapcs.org or written note. WLA front desk will indicate the receipt date on every excuse note. If the absence does not fall in the category listed below, and is not reported by the student’s parent or guardian within 5 school days upon the student's return, it is considered an unexcused absence. The following are considered valid excuses:

Valid Excuse	Required Documentation
Single day absence due to illness (up to two single day absences)	Direct contact from the parent via attendance@wlapcs.org , or written note

<p>Accumulation of three or more single day absences due to illness</p>	<p>Direct contact from the parent via attendance@wlapcs.org, or written note. WLA will refer student to Student Support Team for consultation.</p>
<p>Illness lasting three or more consecutive days</p>	<p>Doctor's note. WLA will refer student to Student Support Team and Leadership Team for consultation.</p>
<p>Doctor, dentist, or medical appointments (Students are only excused for the duration of the appointment and the necessary travel time unless otherwise noted by the doctor.)</p>	<p>Direct contact from the parent via attendance@wlapcs.org, or written note with the time and date of the appointment.</p> <p>If the student is instructed not to return to school a doctor's note will need to be provided.</p>
<p>Religious holidays</p>	<p>Direct contact from the parent via attendance@wlapcs.org, or written note</p>
<p>Family funeral</p>	<p>Direct contact from the parent via attendance@wlapcs.org, or written note</p>
<p>Visitation with parent or legal guardian in the military; immediately before, during, or after deployment</p>	<p>Advance written notice to the Principal</p>
<p>Family Emergency (including house fires, house floods, or incidents of violence in the home, the presence of an emergency response team at a student's home, unexpected hospitalization of a family member, or the unexpected loss of a family member.)</p>	<p>Direct contact from the parent via attendance@wlapcs.org, or written note</p>
<p>Court appearance (Students are only excused for the duration of the court appearance and the necessary travel time.)</p>	<p>Court documents mandating a court appearance</p>

Lawful suspension or exclusion from school by school authorities	None. Information will be tracked internally by WLA.
Temporary closing of facilities or suspension of classes due to severe weather, official activities, holidays, malfunctioning equipment, unsafe or unsanitary conditions, or other condition(s) or emergency requiring a school closing or suspension of classes.	None. WLA will alert students via email and call. All students will be considered excused.
Failure of the District of Columbia to provide transportation in cases where the District of Columbia has a legal responsibility for the transportation of the student.	None. WLA will provide written document from OSSE that transportation services were not provided.

Long Term Absences

If your child will be absent for a week or more please contact the office immediately to make arrangements for assignment completion and to provide adequate time for teachers to plan and prepare for accommodations. Teachers will put forth a reasonable effort to support student learning while away or allow for makeup work. WLA does not provide homebound instruction to students.

Unexcused Absences

Any absence, including an absence from any portion of the instructional day, without a valid excuse, shall be presumed to be unexcused.

Consequences for Absenteeism

The following are consequences for excessive absences from school:

Number of Absences	Procedure and Consequences
Every Daily Absence	Email and robo call to student's parent or guardian
3 unexcused	Student will receive follow up from the Support Team outlining

absences during one interim	consequences
5 or more absences during one interim	Student will receive follow up from the Support Team outlining escalated consequences
8 or more absences during the year	Student will receive follow up from the Support Team outlining escalated consequences
10 unexcused absences	<p>In accordance with D.C. Code § 38-208, WLA will notify OSSE within 2 business days of the student's 10th unexcused absence.</p> <p>In accordance with D.C. Code § 38-207, WLA will notify the student's parent or guardian that they may be in violation of compulsory attendance requirements.</p> <p>Student will receive follow up from the Support Team outlining escalated consequences</p>
15 unexcused absences	<p>In accordance with D.C. Code § 38-208, WLA will notify the Court Social Services Division of the Superior Court of the District of Columbia and the Office of the Attorney General Juvenile Section within 2 business days of a student's 15th unexcused absence.</p> <p>Student will receive follow up from the Support Team outlining escalated consequences</p>
20 or more consecutive unexcused absences	Student may be unenrolled

In accordance with D.C. Code § 38-236.04, No student may be expelled, receive an out-of-school suspension, or be unenrolled for unexcused absences or late arrivals (unless they have accumulated 20 or more consecutive full school day unexcused absences).

Recovering Missed Work Because of Absence(s)

Students are expected to make-up all work or learning missed as a consequence of absences, excused or unexcused. Teachers will use their discretion in creating policies for when work must be recovered due to absences. Students will be expected to complete missed work by the deadline imposed by the teacher's own policy.

Submitting Work on Absent Days

Teachers may impose a policy for work due on the date of the absence. Given WLA's digital nature, it is reasonable enough for a teacher to require that work due on the day a student is absent should still be submitted by the submission deadline.

Educational Neglect

Educational neglect is the failure of a parent/guardian to ensure that a student attends school consistent with the requirements of the law including, without limitation, the failure to enroll a school age student in an educational institution or provide appropriate private instruction; permitting habitual absenteeism from school; inattention to special education needs; refusal to allow or failure to obtain recommended remedial education services; or the failure to obtain treatment or other special education services without reasonable cause. Upon information, reason, or belief that a school-age student who has been withdrawn from WLA has not been re-enrolled in a school following withdrawal from school or is not receiving private instruction, or if WLA suspects educational neglect for any reason, WLA must immediately:

- Report the issue to CFSA;
- Contact the Office of the Attorney General Juvenile Section (for students ages 5 – 13) or the Court Social Services Division of the Superior Court of the District of Columbia (for students over the age of 13);
- Notify the point person for attendance and truancy issues at the Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE): Jessica Morffi, Jessica.morffi@dc.gov 202-727-7207

Attendance Procedures

In accordance with section 5-A2100 of the D.C. Municipal Regulations (DCMR), daily attendance shall include: participation in school-sponsored field trips; participation in an off-site school sponsored or approved activity during a

regularly scheduled school day; in-school suspensions; the number of days a student receives instructional services while expelled or while serving an out-of-school suspension.

Attendance Monitor

In accordance with D.C. Municipal Regulations (DCMR) sections 5-A § 2101.4 and 5-A § 2101.5, an attendance monitor will be designated and reported to the Office of the State Superintendent prior to the first official school day each year. The WLA Attendance Monitor will oversee all attendance processes to ensure accurate and valid data is reported to the Office of the State Superintendent.

Student Arrival Process

At 8:00 am the front doors will open to WLA students. Students will enter WLA through the main entrance. Upon entry, it is the students responsibility to scan their WLA student ID card at a designated sign in station. If a student does not have their WLA student ID card, students must enter their 4-digit student ID number. Student's arrival will not be recorded if they do not swipe their WLA student ID card properly, if they enter the incorrect student ID number, if they bypass the sign-in station at the main entrance, or if they enter the building through an alternate door. If a student fails to sign-in at the designated student arrival station, their attendance for the day will automatically be designated as an unexcused absence unless determined otherwise. The failure to properly sign-in at the designated student arrival station will also result in inaccurate attendance data that may be communicated to the student's parent or guardian. WLA staff members will monitor the front door and ensure all students are abiding by the student arrival process. Student's entry time will be noted and any student arriving after 8:27 am will be marked as tardy.

**Exact times may change from time to time to accommodate broader contextual environmental situations including co-located school schedules.

Attendance Tracking

Student Attendance Records

In accordance with D.C. Code § 38-203, WLA will keep an accurate daily record of attendance, which is open for inspection at any time by OSSE and other relevant parties. Attendance records will be maintained starting on the first official school day, and continue throughout the year, unless the student: officially withdraws from the educational institution; fails to attend at least one day of school in the first three weeks of school without notification for such absence; or transfers to another educational institution.

Expulsion or suspension of a student during the school year does not relieve the educational institution of the duty to record and report the student's daily attendance for the school year in which the expulsion or suspension occurred, as noted in D.C. Municipal Regulations (DCMR) section 5-A § 2101.2.

In accordance with section 5-A2101 of the D.C. Municipal Regulations (DCMR), attendance records for each student will contain the following:

- Dates of enrollment;
- Records of daily attendance, noting the student as present or absent for a full or partial school day;
- Determination of the nature of each absence as excused, unexcused; suspension-related; or expulsion-related;
- Dates of withdrawal from WLA or confirmed transfer to another educational institution, including the name and location of the educational institution to which the student transferred and follow up to confirm the student's new placement;
- Dates of each referral to the school-based student support team, the Child and Family Services Agency, the Court Social Services Division of the Superior Court of the District of Columbia; or the Office of the Attorney General Juvenile Section related to absenteeism or truancy;
- Dates of marking periods;
- Dates on which a law enforcement officer enforcing compulsory attendance laws returns the student to the educational institution;
- Daily late arrival time;
- Dates and times of early dismissal from the school day, as authorized by the student's parent or guardian and by WLA;

- Dates and brief description of communications with student, parent(s) or guardian(s) with regard to school attendance and absences;
- Underlying causes for a student's absenteeism or truancy as determined by the school-based student support team;
- Action plans and strategies implemented by the school-based student support team to eliminate unexcused absences;
- Services utilized by the student to reduce unexcused absences.

Daily Attendance Records

By the end of the school day, the WLA attendance monitor will upload daily attendance records into PowerSchool. The daily attendance records will reflect the student's attendance code for the day. If a student is absent or tardy, their parent or guardian must report an excuse within five days, or the attendance code will reflect what was recorded.

Attendance & Communication

Daily Communication

For every daily absence or tardy, parents will receive an email and robo call informing them of their student's absence or tardy.

Weekly Communication

On a weekly basis, parents will receive their student's leadership report via email, which will outline the student's attendance record to date.

Quarterly Communication

After each interim, families will receive their student's report card. Report cards will include the total number of absences and tardies for the student during that interim. Parents will also have the opportunity to meet with the attendance monitor or student support team to review their student's attendance record at Family Teacher Conferences following the conclusion of each interim.

Student Support Team Communication

If a student surpasses the threshold for absences and tardies at WLA, they will receive specific communication from the Student Support Team to discuss

next steps and consequences to work towards improving their daily attendance.

Attendance Reporting

Student Attendance Reports

On a weekly basis, parents will receive their student's leadership report via email, which will outline the student's attendance record to date.

OSSE Reports

In compliance with D.C. Code § 38-203, Within 60 days after the end of a school year, WLA will report to OSSE, and make publicly available, specific attendance data for that school year.

Attendance Audits

WLA will conduct quarterly attendance audits to ensure attendance data is accurately reflected. WLA will check discipline errors related to attendance codes.

Attendance Sources

- <https://osse.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/osse/documents/LEA%20Attendance%20Training%20November%202018.pdf>
- <https://code.dccouncil.us/dc/council/code/titles/38/chapters/2/subchapters/l/>
- <https://dcregs.dc.gov/Common/DCMR/SectionList.aspx?SectionNumber=5-A2101>
- <https://dcregs.dc.gov/Common/DCMR/SectionList.aspx?SectionNumber=5-A2102>
- <http://dcrules.elaws.us/dcmr/5-a2102>
- <https://dcregs.dc.gov/Common/DCMR/SectionList.aspx?SectionNumber=5-A2103>

Student/Parent Grievance Policy and Procedure

Any person who believes that Washington Leadership Academy has discriminated on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, disability, age, religion, marital status, personal appearance, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, familial status, family responsibilities, political affiliation, source of income, or otherwise may submit a complaint to the designated individuals below.

Complaints may be submitted to:

- Stacy Kane, Executive Director - skane@wlapcs.org

Complaints of student on student sexual harassment, sexual assault or dating violence are governed by Washington Leadership Academy's Student on Student Sexual Harassment Policy, found in this handbook. Such complaints should be submitted to:

- Stacy Kane, Executive Director - skane@wlapcs.org

Complaints of bullying are governed by Washington Leadership Academy's Bullying Prevention Policy, found in this handbook. Such complaints should be submitted to:

- Chrissy Smith, Vice Principal - csmith@wlapcs.org

The grievance procedures outlined below establish how all other complaints will be investigated and resolved. These grievance procedures are intended to provide for a prompt and equitable resolution of complaints. These grievance procedures may be used by students and parents. These grievance procedures do not bar individuals from filing claims in other forums to the extent permitted by state or federal law.

Washington Leadership Academy encourages individuals to discuss their concerns with appropriate school officials before resorting to a formal complaint. However, individuals are not required to do so before filing a formal complaint.

Washington Leadership Academy will not retaliate against any person who files a complaint or participates in an investigation in accordance with these procedures.

A formal complaint may be filed by following the steps outlined below:

- **Step 1:**

- Within 90 days of the alleged discrimination or harassment, written notice of the complaint must be filed with the individual designated above. If the complaint is being made against the designated individual above, the complaint can be submitted directly to the individual identified in Step 2, who will designate an appropriate individual to investigate the complaint. The written notice must include the nature of the complaint, the date(s) of the occurrence, the desired result, and must be signed and dated by the person making the complaint.
- Upon receipt of the written notice of the complaint, the designated individual to whom the complaint was submitted will immediately initiate an adequate, reliable and impartial investigation of the complaint. Each investigation will include, as necessary, interviewing witnesses, obtaining documents and allowing parties to present evidence. All documentation related to the investigation will remain confidential.
- Within thirty (30) business days of receiving the written notice of the complaint, the individual investigating the complaint will respond in writing to the complainant. The response will summarize the course and outcome of the investigation, and identify an appropriate resolution. If, as a result of the investigation, it is determined that discrimination or harassment have occurred, appropriate corrective and remedial action will be taken.

- **Step 2**

- If the complainant wishes to appeal the decision from Step 1, he/she may submit a signed statement of appeal to Eric Collazo, Principal (ecollazo@wlapcs.org), within ten (10) business days after receipt of the response. If the complaint is being made against Mr. Collazo, the appeal can be submitted to the Board Chair, Jim Doyle (boardchair@wlapcs.org) who will designate an appropriate individual to address the appeal. The Principal, or designee, will review all relevant information and meet with the parties involved, as necessary. Within twenty-one (21) business days of receiving the

statement of appeal, the Principal, or designee, will respond in writing to the complainant summarizing the outcome of the appeal and any corrective or remedial action to be taken.

- **Step 3**

- If the complainant is not satisfied with the decision of the Principal, he/she may appeal through a signed written statement to the school Board of Trustees within ten (10) business days of the receipt of the Principal's response. A statement of appeal to the Board may be submitted to the Board Chair, Jim Doyle (boardchair@wlapcs.org) who will provide the statement to the Board. In an attempt to resolve the grievance, the Board shall review all relevant information and meet with the concerned parties and their representatives within thirty (30) days of the receipt of such an appeal. A copy of the Board's disposition of the appeal shall be sent to each concerned party within fifteen (15) business days of this meeting.

Grievants also have the right to file a complaint with the Office for Civil Rights by: (1) mailing the complaint to Director, District of Columbia Office, Office for Civil Rights (OCR), U.S. Department of Education, 400 Maryland Avenue, SW, Washington, D.C. 20202-1475; (2) faxing it to (202) 453-6021; or (3) filing it electronically at: www.ed.gov/ocr/complaintprocess.html. For more information, you can contact OCR at (202) 453-6020 (voice), (877) 521-2172 (TDD), or ocr.dc@ed.gov.

Non-Discrimination Policy

WLA provides educational opportunities without regard to race, creed, color, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, marital status, disability or physical ability. Additionally, WLA prohibits discrimination based on race, creed, color, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, marital status, disability, or age in any matters involving its students, staff, programming, service providers, or families. This policy is governed by the Governance Board for WLA. Any questions regarding the regulation of or administration of school policies should be submitted to the WLA Executive Director.

Bullying Coordinator: Chrissy Smith, csmith@wlapcs.org

Title IX Coordinator: Stacy Kane, skane@wlapcs.org

Section 504 Coordinator: Christina Marino; cmarino@wlapcs.org

Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) is a federal law that affords parents the right to have access to their children's education records, the right to seek to have the records amended, and the right to have some control over the disclosure of personally identifiable information from the education records. When a student turns 18 years old, or enters a postsecondary institution at any age, the rights under FERPA transfer from the parents to the student. The full text of FERPA can be found at 20 U.S.C. 1232g and the FERPA regulations are found at 34 CFR Part 99. FERPA Notice of Rights was presented to families during the enrollment process as part of the Online Registration process and can be found on the [U.S. Department of Education's website](#).

FERPA Notice

FERPA is a Federal law that is administered by the Family Policy Compliance Office (Office) in the U.S. Department of Education (Department). 20 U.S.C. § 1232g; 34 CFR Part 99. FERPA applies to educational agencies and institutions (e.g., schools) that receive funding under any program administered by the Department. Private and parochial schools at the elementary and secondary levels generally do not receive such funding and are, therefore, not subject to FERPA.

FERPA gives custodial and noncustodial parents alike certain rights with respect to their children's education records, unless a school is provided with evidence that there is a court order or State law that specifically provides to the contrary. Otherwise, both custodial and noncustodial parents have the right to access their children's education records, the right to seek to have the records amended, the right to consent to disclosure of personally identifiable information from the records (except in certain circumstances specified in the FERPA regulations, some of which are discussed below), and the right to file a

complaint with the Department. When a student reaches 18 years of age or attends a postsecondary institution, he or she becomes an "eligible student," and all rights under FERPA transfer from the parent to the student. The term "education records" is defined as those records that contain information directly related to a student and which are maintained by an educational agency or institution or by a party acting for the agency or institution.

FERPA generally prohibits the improper disclosure of personally identifiable information derived from education records. Thus, information that an official obtained through personal knowledge or observation, or has heard orally from others, is not protected under FERPA. This remains applicable even if education records exist which contain that information, unless the official had an official role in making a determination that generated a protected education record.

Under FERPA, a school is not generally required to maintain particular education records or education records that contain specific information. Rather, a school is required to provide certain privacy protections for those education records that it does maintain. Also, unless there is an outstanding request by a parent to inspect and review education records, FERPA permits the school to destroy such records without notice to the parent.

Access to Education Records

Under FERPA, a school must provide a parent with an opportunity to inspect and review his or her child's education records within 45 days following its receipt of a request. A school is required to provide a parent with copies of education records, or make other arrangements, if a failure to do so would effectively prevent the parent from obtaining access to the records. A case in point would be a situation in which the parent does not live within commuting distance of the school.

A school is not generally required by FERPA to provide a parent with access to school calendars or general notices such as announcements of parent-teacher meetings or extra-curricular activities. That type of information is not generally directly related to an individual student and, therefore, does not meet the definition of an education record.

Under FERPA, a school is not required to provide information that is not maintained or to create education records in response to a parent's request. Accordingly, a school is not required to provide a parent with updates on his

or her child's progress in school unless such information already exists in the form of an education record.

Amendment of Education Records

Under FERPA, a parent has the right to request that inaccurate or misleading information in his or her child's education records be amended. While a school is not required to amend education records in accordance with a parent's request, the school is required to consider the request. If the school decides not to amend a record in accordance with a parent's request, the school must inform the parent of his or her right to a hearing on the matter. If, as a result of the hearing, the school still decides not to amend the record, the parent has the right to insert a statement in the record setting forth his or her views. That statement must remain with the contested part of the student's record for as long as the record is maintained.

However, while the FERPA amendment procedure may be used to challenge facts that are inaccurately recorded, it may not be used to challenge a grade, an opinion, or a substantive decision made by a school about a student. FERPA was intended to require only that schools conform to fair recordkeeping practices and not to override the accepted standards and procedures for making academic assessments, disciplinary rulings, or placement determinations. Thus, while FERPA affords parents the right to seek to amend education records which contain inaccurate information, this right cannot be used to challenge a grade, an individual's opinion, or a substantive decision made by a school about a student. Additionally, if FERPA's amendment procedures are not applicable to a parent's request for amendment of education records, the school is not required under FERPA to hold a hearing on the matter.

Disclosure of Education Records

Under FERPA, a school may not generally disclose personally identifiable information from a minor student's education records to a third party unless the student's parent has provided written consent. However, there are a number of exceptions to FERPA's prohibition against non-consensual disclosure of personally identifiable information from education records. Under these exceptions, schools are permitted to disclose personally identifiable information from education records without consent, though

they are not required to do so by FERPA. Following is general information regarding some of these exceptions.

One of the exceptions to the prior written consent requirement in FERPA allows "school officials," including teachers, within a school to obtain access to personally identifiable information contained in education records provided the school has determined that they have "legitimate educational interest" in the information. Although the term "school official" is not defined in the statute or regulations, this Office generally interprets the term to include parties such as: a teacher; administrator; board member; support or clerical staff; attorney; nurse and health staff; counselor; human resources staff; information systems specialist; school security personnel; and a contractor, consultant, volunteer or other party to whom the school has outsourced institutional services or functions.

A school may disclose personally identifiable information from education records without consent to a "school official" under this exception only if the school has first determined that the official has a "legitimate educational interest" in obtaining access to the information for the school. A school that allows school officials to obtain access to personally identifiable information contained in education records under this exception must include in its annual notification of FERPA rights a specification of its criteria for determining who constitutes a "school official" and what constitutes "legitimate educational interests." A school official generally has a legitimate educational interest if the official needs to review an education record in order to fulfill his or her professional responsibility.

Another exception permits a school to disclose personally identifiable information from a student's education records, without consent, to another school in which the student seeks or intends to enroll. The sending school may make the disclosure if it has included in its annual notification of rights a statement that it forwards education records in such circumstances. Otherwise, the school must make a reasonable attempt to notify the parent in advance of making the disclosure, unless the parent or eligible student has initiated the disclosure. The school must also provide a parent with a copy of the records that were released if requested by the parent.

FERPA permits a school non-consensually to disclose personally identifiable information from a student's education records when such information has been appropriately designated as directory information. "Directory

information" is defined as information contained in the education records of a student that would not generally be considered harmful or an invasion of privacy if disclosed. Directory information could include Pursuant to this policy, WLA will treat the following as directory information: information such as the student's name, address, e-mail address, telephone listing, date and place of birth, major field of study, participation in officially recognized activities and sports, weight and height of members of athletic teams, dates of attendance, degrees and awards received, the most recent previous educational agency or institution attended, photograph, grade level (such as 11th grade or junior year), and enrollment status (full-time or part-time).

Parents and eligible students can opt out of the release of directory information by making such a request in writing to the [include title] at [include email address] by [insert deadline].

A school may disclose directory information without consent if it has given public notice of the types of information it has designated as directory information, the parent's right to restrict the disclosure of such information, and the period of time within which a parent has to notify the school that he or she does not want any or all of those types of information designated as directory information. Also, FERPA does not require a school to notify parents individually of the types of information it has designated as directory information. Rather, the school may provide this notice by any means likely to inform parents of the types of information it has designated as directory information.

FERPA also permits a school to disclose personally identifiable information from education records of an "eligible student" (a student age 18 or older or enrolled in a postsecondary institution at any age) to his or her parents if the student is a "dependent student" as that term is defined in Section 152 of the Internal Revenue Code. Generally, if either parent has claimed the student as a dependent on the parent's most recent income tax statement, the school may non-consensually disclose the student's education records to both parents.

There are several other exceptions to FERPA's prohibition against non-consensual disclosure of personally identifiable information from education records, some of which are briefly mentioned below. Under certain conditions (specified in the FERPA regulations, 34 CFR Part 99), a school may

non-consensually disclose personally identifiable information from education records:

- to authorized representatives of the Comptroller General of the United States, the Attorney General of the United States, the U.S. Secretary of Education, and State and local educational authorities for audit or evaluation of Federal or State supported education programs, or for the enforcement of or compliance with Federal legal requirements that relate to those programs;
- in connection with financial aid for which the student has applied or received;
- to state and local authorities pursuant to a State statute concerning the juvenile justice system and the system's ability to effectively serve the student whose records are being disclosed;
- to organizations conducting studies for or on behalf of the school making the disclosure for the purposes of administering predictive tests, administering student aid programs, or improving instruction;
- to comply with a judicial order or a lawfully issued subpoena; and
- in connection with a health or safety emergency.

As stated above, the conditions specified in the FERPA regulations have to be met before a school may non-consensually disclose personally identifiable information from education records in connection with any of the exceptions mentioned above.

Annual Notification of FERPA Rights

Under FERPA, a school must annually notify parents of students in attendance of their rights under FERPA. The annual notification must include information regarding a parent's right to inspect and review his or her child's education records, the right to seek to amend the records, the right to consent to disclosure of personally identifiable information from the records (except in certain circumstances), and the right to file a complaint with the Office regarding an alleged failure by a school to comply with FERPA. The school must also inform parents of its definitions of the terms "school official" and "legitimate educational interest."

FERPA does not require a school to notify parents individually of their rights under FERPA. Rather, the school may provide the annual notification by any means likely to inform parents of their rights. Thus, the annual notification

may be published by various means, including any of the following: in a student handbook; in a notice to parents; in a calendar of events; on the school's website (though this should not be the exclusive means of notification); in the local newspaper; or posted in a central location at the school or various locations throughout the school. Additionally, some schools include their directory information notice as part of the annual notice of rights under FERPA.

Law Enforcement Units and Law Enforcement Unit Records

A "law enforcement unit" means any individual, office, department, division or other component of a school, such as a unit of commissioned police officers or non-commissioned security guards, that is officially authorized or designated by the school to: enforce any local, State, or Federal law, or refer to appropriate authorities a matter for enforcement of any law against any individual or organization; or to maintain the physical security and safety of the school. The law enforcement unit does not lose its status as a law enforcement unit if it also performs other, non-law enforcement functions for the school, including investigation of incidents or conduct that constitutes or leads to a disciplinary action or proceeding against a student.

"Law enforcement unit records" (i.e., records created by the law enforcement unit, created for a law enforcement purpose, and maintained by the law enforcement unit) are not "education records" subject to the privacy protections of FERPA. As such, the law enforcement unit may refuse to provide a parent with an opportunity to inspect and review law enforcement unit records, and it may disclose law enforcement unit records to third parties without the parent's prior written consent. However, education records, or personally identifiable information from education records, which the school shares with the law enforcement unit do not lose their protected status as education records because they are shared with the law enforcement unit.

Complaints of Alleged Failures to Comply with FERPA

FERPA vests the rights it affords in the parent of a student. The statute does not provide for these rights to be vested in a third party who has not suffered an alleged violation of their rights under FERPA. Thus, we require that a

parent have "standing," i.e., have suffered an alleged violation of his or her rights under FERPA, in order to file a complaint.

The Office may investigate those timely complaints that contain specific allegations of fact giving reasonable cause to believe that a school has violated FERPA. A timely complaint is defined as one that is submitted to the Office within 180 days of the date that the complainant knew or reasonably should have known of the alleged violation. Complaints that do not meet FERPA's threshold requirement for timeliness are not investigated.

If we receive a timely complaint that contains a specific allegation of fact giving reasonable cause to believe that a school has violated FERPA, we may initiate an administrative investigation into the allegation in accordance with procedures outlined in the FERPA regulations. If a determination is made that a school violated FERPA, the school and the complainant are so advised, and the school is informed of the steps it must take to come into compliance with the law. The investigation is closed when voluntary compliance is achieved.

Please note that a parent should state his or her allegations as clearly and succinctly as possible. To aid us in efficiently processing allegations, we ask that a parent only include supporting documentation that is relevant to the allegations provided. Otherwise, we may return the documentation and request clarification. This Office does not have the resources to review voluminous documents and materials to determine whether an allegation of a violation of FERPA by a school is included. A parent may obtain a complaint form by calling (202) 260-3887. For administrative and privacy reasons, we do not discuss individual allegations and cases via email. Please mail completed complaint forms to the Office (address below) for review and any appropriate action.

Complaint Regarding Access

If a parent believes that a school has violated FERPA by failing to comply with the parent's request for access to his or her child's education records, the parent may complete a FERPA complaint form and should include the following specific information: the date of the request for access to the student's education records; the name of the school official to whom the request was made (a dated copy of any written request to the school should be provided, if possible); the response of the school official, if any; and the specific nature of the information requested.

Complaint Regarding Amendment

If a parent believes that a school has violated FERPA by failing to provide the parent with an opportunity to seek amendment of inaccurate information in his or her child's education records or failed to offer the parent an opportunity for a hearing on the matter, the parent may complete a FERPA complaint form and should include the following specific information: the date of the request for amendment of the student's education records; the name of the school official to whom the request was made (a dated copy of any written request to the school should be provided, if possible); the response of the school official, if any; the specific nature of the information for which amendment was requested; and the evidence provided to the school to support the assertion that such information is inaccurate.

Complaint Regarding Disclosure

If a parent believes that a school has violated FERPA by improperly disclosing personally identifiable information from his or her child's education records, the parent may complete a FERPA complaint form and should include the following specific information: the date the alleged improper disclosure occurred or the date the parent learned of the disclosure; the name of the school official who made the disclosure, if that is known; the third party to whom the education records were disclosed; and the specific nature of the information disclosed.

This guidance document is designed to provide parents of minor students with some basic information regarding FERPA and their rights, and to address some of the basic questions most frequently asked by parents. You can review the FERPA regulations, frequently asked questions, significant opinions of the Office, and other information regarding FERPA at our Website as follows:

www.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/fpco/index.html

If, after reading this guidance document, you have questions regarding FERPA that are not addressed here, you may write to the Office for additional guidance at the following address:

Family Policy Compliance Office

U.S. Department of Education 400 Maryland Avenue, SW

Washington, DC 20202-8520

General Parent Complaints: Parents should first contact their son or daughter's Assistant Principal. If the issue is not resolved by the Assistant Principal, then the parent should contact the Principal. If the issue is not resolved by the Principal, then the parent should contact the Executive Director. If the concerns have not been addressed, the parent may contact Bisi Oyedele who is the member of the Board of Directors designated to receive grievance complaints. Bisi can be reached at:

boyedele@edforwarddc.org

Admission Preference Policy

Per the District of Columbia School Reform Act, Washington Leadership Academy recognizes three lottery preferences during the open enrollment period:

- 1) Sibling attending: Preference for a student who has a sibling currently attending Washington Leadership Academy.
- 2) Sibling offered: Preference for a student who has a sibling matched to Washington Leadership Academy in the lottery or receives a waitlist offer
- 3) Children of staff: Preference to a student whose parent or guardian works at Washington Leadership Academy. They must be a full-time staff member and residency rules still apply.

Students applying after the open enrollment period will be added to the waitlist on a first-come first-served basis. For more information regarding My School DC, visit

<http://www.myschooldc.org/>.